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SUBJECT: FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN TRANSATLANTIC LUNCH, UNGA MEETINGS

REF: STATE 149114

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¶1. (SBU) FM Douste-Blazy cabinet advisor Francois-Xavier Carrel-Billiard told us September 13 that FM Douste-Blazy at this time planned to attend the September 22 informal transatlantic lunch hosted by the Secretary, and would also attend the U.S.-EU ministerial meeting following. New Political Director Gerard Araud would replace Douste-Blazy if for any reason Douste-Blazy could not attend. Carrel-Billiard asked if the U.S. would reconsider holding the meeting in French and English, making the argument that this had been the case for similar lunches in Sofia and Brussels. Otherwise Douste-Blazy would have to have an interpreter with him (Claire Keefe), which would add to the number of participants.

¶2. (SBU) Speaking more generally about France's UNGA participation, Carrel-Billiard said President Chirac would be present September 18 and 19, and possibly part of September 20, although he was unable to confirm that. Other members of the delegation, besides Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy, included Political Director Araud, Policy Planning Director Pierre Levy, and (we assume) IO Director Sylvie Bermann. We noted our understanding that NEA A/S Welch would have a separate meeting with Araud on the Middle East, and queried as to the best interlocutor on Cuba transition for U/S Dobriansky. Carrel-Billiard suggested that Levy as the best choice, since Cuba transition included democracy writ large. We undertook to pass the suggestion to Washington.

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